Yuri Lily Tsurumaki

Lily at the Japan Airlines office in Los Angeles

“One day, a classmate saw my name is Lily Oki and she was surprised she says, ‘You know I asked my mother, you disappeared you didn’t come back to class to school.’ And someone remembered me all those years? I thought my gosh, it was touching but she said no one talked about it.”

I would not have met Lily had it not been for the wonders of social media. Her granddaughter, Adina Mori-Holt, who works for the Little Tokyo Service Center in Los Angeles reached out with a simple request: "My grandma always brings stories up from camp but it's usually while I'm driving. I would love to have an oral history from her before she's gone." Of course, I knew the feeling all too well.

Thus launched a nearly two and a half hour interview with Adina and 85-year-old Lily Yuri Tsurumaki, who was born and raised in Los Angeles and still living close to the area where she grew up. Her mother was Nisei and her father, Issei. After meeting in Japan, they essentially got engaged there. But after her father came back to California to start working, her young mother decided to board a ship and make the arduous trip across to California to find him, at only 15 or 16 years old. They managed to make a living in Los Angeles as a domestic and as a gardener, but in 1942 the family of four – which now included Lily and her brother younger brother, Kazuto – would be uprooted from their lives and sent to Heart Mountain. Lily herself was forced to grow up quickly, adapting to becoming a wife right after the war. "I got married when I was a teen. Everybody else was going dancing, all having their fun." It would take years of being in a difficult marriage before she decided to strike out on her own with (and for) her young daughter and start a career. She worked for Japan Airlines for twenty years, landing the job in a way that could only be labeled as fate.

In many ways, Lily's life story is a beautiful tapestry of both good and bad luck: If she didn't get the job at Japan Airlines, she may have never crossed paths with the man she would call the "single love of my life," who she would only get to spend a short time with after years in an unsatisfying marriage. It's a blend of unexplainable, serendipitous meetings and tragic

loss. I suppose the same could be said of any of our lives.

The last Oki family photo taken before the camps. From left to right: Yuri, Yayoi, Kaz, and Kazuichi (Jack)

This was the last picture before we went to camp. That was my mother, my brother — he's two years younger than me — and my father. The war started what, December 7th wasn't it? We had our Christmas tree and my dad said we would take the last family picture before he had to turn in all the cameras, swords and everything into the police station. And he was developing his own pictures at home in the bathtub. He would do it in the bathroom, a dark room. So that's one of the last pictures we had all dressed up.

That's incredible. This changes a lot, just looking at the photo that way.

So I was in the third grade at the school down the hill. And in third grade, I had to leave for camp. It wasn't until we came back and we were finished with high school, there was a high school event, gathering. And one day, a classmate saw my name is Lily Oki and she was surprised she says, 'You know I asked my mother; you disappeared, you didn't come back to class, to school.' And someone remembered me all those years? I thought my gosh, it was touching but she said I guess no one talked about it.

So you just left and the teachers didn't explain?

Just didn't say anything. I thought for someone to remember you, she said she wondered what happened, I just disappeared, I didn't come to school anymore. I guess no one talked about it. So I thought everybody went to

camp somewhere, but I found out it's just the West Coast. So I thought everybody on the East Coast went to camp.

But you knew it was just Japanese people?

Yeah at that age I knew it was just the Japanese because of the war. Well, I know when we came back going to school, a lot of people used to say, 'Hey Jap, get back home,' or 'We don't want you here,' kind of thing, you know? So I used to go home on a hillside, you know finding hiding places to go back on because you were scared. They would throw rocks or do things, you know. I mean they were all kids, your classmates so-to-speak. So I guess we weren't wanted right away. We didn't come back right after the war because we went to Pomona Assembly Center. So my mother and brother, we went down to the place where the bus came down by Alvarado and Sixth Street, isn't it? Yeah Sixth Street, where the lake is.

Adina: It's called MacArthur Park now.

We went by bus and my father drove his work truck, and they said he could bring it in and he took my mother's sewing machine because we could only carry what we had on, that was all we could take with us. So my father took my mother's sewing machine and some of the goods that we might need. The rest of the stuff we had to put under the house basement, what we could keep.

He was allowed to take his truck into the assembly center?

Yes. He had to drive it in and then, you can't keep the car there. So he said he had to sell it for ten dollars. What could we do with a car? I mean, we couldn't bring it back again. But my mother had her sewing machine so she was able to make curtains for our rooms. Little things like that. She didn't do too much sewing for boys things but she made all my clothes.

She was resourceful bringing in her sewing machine.

I guess so, I don't think everyone had those kinds of things.

I've heard of a few people smuggling in a sewing machine but it

sounds like that was pretty open for your family, like they were allowed to do that.

We knew Pomona because we used to go to their fairground every year. It was in the parking lot. I realized because they had a main street with eucalyptus trees planted. They must have put fence around it to make it into a temporary camp. So all we had was our little room. They called it an assembly center, I don't know why.

So if you were going to start at the beginning with this Christmas picture almost, can you describe what your parents were doing at the time and what was your life like before the war broke out?

He was a gardener and Mother was just a domestic. Mrs. Long I know was an artist, and she worked for her, and she helped her a lot. And my dad was a gardener. So he came around Larchmont and I didn't know where it was as a kid, you know. So he was working down on those fancy homes with front lawns because he's talking about cutting grass on the front lawn. She worked at a doctor's home, but otherwise she was home.

And were they themselves Issei?

My father be Issei but my mother be Nisei. She was born in Long Beach. But I guess when she was about three or four, her father was a restaurant cook. When the children were ready to start school, he realized if he doesn't let them go to a Japanese school or a decent school in Japan you will never be able to marry right or go into the right family, that kind of thing. So he took all the family home.

So my mother's side, she had a brother, Setsuo, was he younger or older? He used to live with us all the time so I used to always look at him as Superman. He used to do judo. So he was husky, and he looked tall and big and handsome. After the war, I guess he went home on the last ship. I guess they said his mother was ill, come home immediately. They must have known that the war was going to begin. And he took the last ship home.

So he was over there during the war but before he was living with

you?

He was here. I don't know how long he was here but I remember making mochi things like that down on Sunset. But he did judo, so he was a strong man, so I always looked up to him as a superhuman. But he did take the last ship home and that's the last we heard. We had no further contact because you couldn't write or anything.

No correspondence.

No, you couldn't correspond or anything. I guess he said he was taken into the Japanese army immediately and because he spoke and read English; it was an advantage to them. He was sent to Burma and that's where he got malaria, that's where he was. He looked scrawny when I went back to Japan to meet him for the first time with the family after the war. He had all this curly hair. I thought it didn't look like my uncle at all. But I guess after his malaria illness, his whole body got small and changed.

What prefecture were your parents from?

My father's from Etajima. But my mother's Hiroshima, the city of Hiroshima and Hiroshima-ken. That's where they dropped the atomic bomb but they were on the other side of the hill. There was an old house from long ago but there was a little mountain and on the other side was Hiroshima city, and this side was a little bit country. And that's where they lived. Maybe that's why they were protected from the atomic blast or energy.

My dad worked up north toward Modesto or some place? I guess there was a lot of farming. And then my father became ill, something with a stomach thing and he couldn't go to the hospital here. So he finally came home and since then he's been never strong with his stomach, he'll get sick easy. And when he came home he was there in Japan for a while, and that's where he met my mother.

Was that arranged at all?

No it wasn't. As far as I know they were introduced by a friend, another family friend, Morioko-san. And I guess Pop liked her. I don't know, he wanted to come back to America. And he came back and left mom there, she was still going to school.

Adina: There was a big age difference. There was like a 15 year age difference. She was a teenager still when they met. I think my great-grandmother was 16 or 17 when my grandma was born.

Yes, she was young. The age difference was quite a bit.

So your father came back. Or did they come back together to California?

No, my father came back after he got this bad illness in his stomach, he wanted to come back. But he was introduced to my mother in Japan. And she said it was embarrassing when she was betrothed to someone but he didn't care to come back, she didn't think that he would ever earn enough money to come back after her. So one day she just told her father she's going to America and she got on the boat herself, somehow. And she came to America to look for him. And they got married actually at the place where I was born. He was in his gardener's clothes that he was working in and they just got married there. So my mother used to feel so sad when you'd see all the new weddings that we were doing and the children were having. And they had a minister come and marry them so they could live together.

And Mrs. Marshall, I guess she was awfully good to my parents because every Christmas we always went to her house. And I still remember the stairs though, it was funny. It was on the hillside and you had to climb up stairs to their house level. But she had a wooden stairway all the way up to her house. And we lived down the stairs. And my mother was saying that Mrs. Marshall taught her how to play the piano and cook, taught her English, and did a lot of things for them. So every Christmas we would go visit her, take some Christmas gifts and visit them. I always remember the stairs. My mother used to say I used to climb up the stairs but I never could

come down. I was scared to come down, so I would be sitting up there crying. So she said she had to go and get me every time, she said she was with her second child, my brother. So she said it was it was getting to be awful.

She said that she used to lock the door but I'd be gone again. I used to go and love to pick flowers, she said. I don't remember that but I go down the driveway and go up the street on Virgil and go up to people's backyards. And I guess I was just picking them, I was breaking all the stems, bending the flower stems and the neighbors were getting so upset but she said she couldn't watch me. So she put a hook on the door but she said somehow I found a way to open it, so she kept putting the hook up higher and higher to the top of the door.

She was trying to keep you in.

Yeah to keep me in from always going out, running out again, or whatever work she's doing around the house. And I guess, she'll find a broom on the floor. I found a way to knock it open. I used to sneak out and she said she had to go look for me she'll find one sock here, somewhere down the sidewalk she'll follow the shoes. And she'll find another sock somewhere else. And she said she always followed my path only because I didn't like to wear shoes and socks for some reason.

It's like a game between you two.

I drove my mother nuts. She said I really was too rambunctious.

You kept her on her toes. She must have been tired.

Yeah it was too much for her and I guess she had a big stomach, so it made it harder.

And how was the relationship between your parents? Did they have a good marriage?

I think so but my father was much older than she, but they were introduced by a family friend in Japan but because he never came after her she said it

was embarrassing. They were sort of like betrothed.

Were they still corresponding though?

I think so. I can't figure it out how she would have known where to go. But she said she was stuck at Terminal Island, after you get off the boat for so many days, I don't know for inspection or whatever. But she said she was terrified but Pop didn't come after her for three days or something, and she was very upset.

Did they explain to you and your brother what was happening after Pearl Harbor? You were very young but did you know there was something wrong?

We didn't know, we heard something about maybe a war starting.

When you were in elementary school before you left, were there other Japanese students?

No, I was the only one in my class. So the teacher probably didn't say anything and probably my parents never went down to tell them either.

You just left.

Yeah, I was just gone. The parents probably never talked about it, you know? Because of the war. After I came back though, after the war ended and I was now ready for junior high school not grammar school. And they'll call you 'Jap.' You're trying to find a way to come home, so I found all kinds of hideaways, bushy places. There was a stairway. It's also almost half covered with trees and bushes that you could hardly tell, and I used to go sneaking up those stairs to go home. Yeah, all the students walking to school say, 'Hey Jap you don't belong here.' Or they'll throw rocks at you.

And were you still the only Japanese when you came back or were there other Japanese students?

No, not in my particular school area. Maybe if I was in Boyle Heights or something it'd be different, maybe. But where I was was all Caucasian.

You were picked on.

Yeah, because I was the only Japanese. So what's sad was down below on Sunset Boulevard, there was A&P Market and there was also a grocery store, Food House. Mother would give me a dollar or some money to buy some hamburger meat or something. And you stand there waiting for help but no one pays attention to you. And then some other Caucasian lady would come by and ring the bell because no one is out there. And they'd come out and take care of them and service them then they go back in. And you stand there for the longest time and I used to go home crying because I couldn't buy the meat, the hamburger meat or something that mother asked me to pick up. There was discrimination, you don't know how to deal with it.

We ended up in Heart Mountain, Wyoming and there the barracks were big and far. I remember, you saw this mountain that looks like an 'r', and we were close to that other end. I remember, you're trying to walk to your barrack but the wind would be just so powerful it would just push you back more. Then all of a sudden these big tumbleweeds would come right at you, rolling all over the place. And sure enough one of them would come and hit you, and they're as big as you are. So you had a hard time trying to even get home. There was an art class. And Grandpa and I used to do things more together, maybe that's why I'm closer to Grandpa. He used to take me. So we were doing drawings. But that desert, really was — it was hard, I don't know how people survived it.

And I remember that first winter coming I got sick, it used to get so cold at night and your room didn't have a warmer. I think there was a pot belly stove but you can't warm your room. We could never could get our room warm enough and I remember I got pneumonia and they couldn't take me to a doctor because the doctor's way at the other end of the camp. It was cold, couldn't get an ambulance, so ever since then I've been weak and getting sick.

And so was that the first winter in camp?

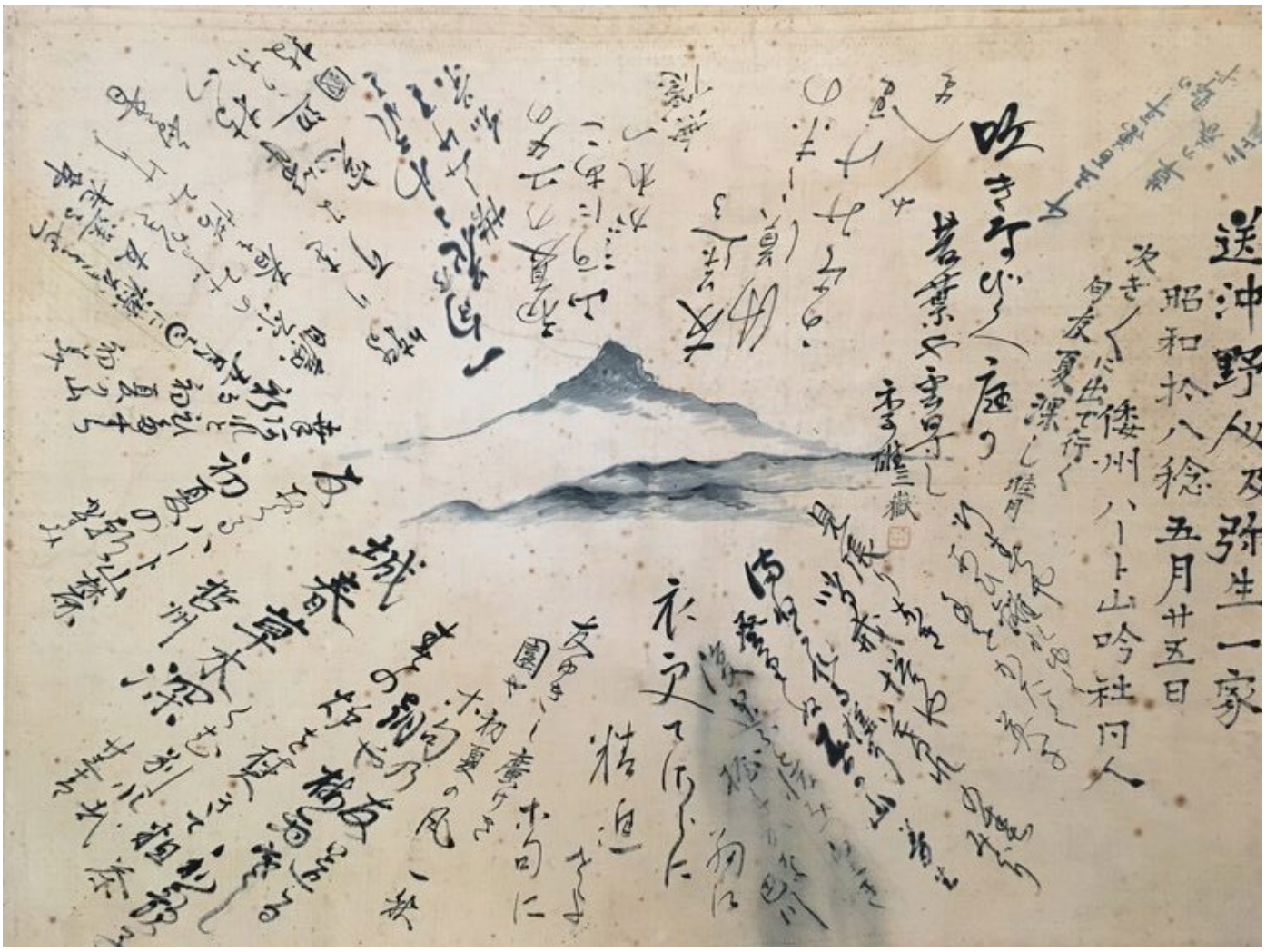
Yeah, first winter in Heart Mountain.

So you were about eight or nine?

Yeah let's see, I would've been in the third grade. I guess my mom nursed me, somehow, but since then I've been always getting, every winter get sick. And I was always a toughy one, I never got sick, you know? And my father in camp and in Pomona, too, he never— you know as a man, I guess they have pride? They never clean toilets or bathrooms. But he got a job cleaning toilets. So he said it was degrading, but he did it.

Did your parents do anything else in camp?

My mother was doing embroidery here before they went to camp. And there was a Mr. Kinushita. Being it's a desert area there's a lot of Jasper rocks and dinosaur bones sometimes. And Mr. Kinushita started a rock group so they can go outside the campground and look around the desert area for rocks. Mr. Kinushita made arrangements and Grandpa was right away into this thing. But I think it was just one season there, we left camp early. We were one of the early ones to leave because we had a minister friend here that was at the church and he went to Utah and that was before the war. And I guess my father was in contact and they said there's work out here and you could live out here.



Members of the rock collecting group sign their names for the Oki family to take with them to Utah

One thing in Heart Mountain though, between the two mess halls we were divided A and B, and A was the lower one and B was up here. But in between the space, they used to put water in there in the winter in that spot and we used to ice skate. And Grandpa, too. We had the Montgomery Ward order book. They all ordered clothing and ice skates. So that's where Grandpa learned to ice skate.

And so they went to Utah. What kind of work was it?

Oh it was farming. But the minister friend that had left here could be our sponsor. They said they found a house for us. So we go out to Utah, and we find it's a log cabin. The log cabin was one building from there they had another attachment which was the bedroom. It was too cold so we always had to stay in the log cabin with the big iron stove. There was a big barn,

and we had chickens. It was so cold that we had to have the chicks all stay in our cabin.

You could not escape the cold! And growing up in Los Angeles, that must have been awful for you.

It was cold, it was near Idaho. And we had no running water so we had to go to the well to get our water out. We had a bucket of water in the kitchen and it would freeze during the night and you had to break the ice to do the wash. And then we had a kerosene stove because no gas or anything. We had electricity. I know my brother used to help me too, we used to get the washtub, put the water in and put it on top of the kerosene stove, go out to the well to wash on a washboard. Then dump the water some place around there then get the well water to rinse.

It was a lot of work.

It was.

Were you around a Japanese American community in Utah?

No not really, but there were Japanese living here and there in spots. They didn't own anything but they were working as farmers. So when it came to picking fruit that was great. We went to pick cherries and Mom and Pop took us, so we were climbing inside the tree to pick the cherries, eating half of it. And my father and mother, they would go outside and pick it on a ladder. My dad would pick the tall ones because it was a big tree. That kind of time is springtime, around May. So the harvest is hard, they even let the school out. I used to go to this Elwood School, and it was only four rooms. And we had everything from kindergarten up to eighth grade. Two grades in each classroom so they had the older ones help, too.

If you were to think about your parents, I don't know if they ever talked about what was happening. Do you get a sense that they felt a certain way?

I know my father said that he didn't believe that camp life was good for the

children. That I remember.

So that was his theory, that being in camp wasn't good for his children?

He said that it wasn't good. That's where I got all that sickness and couldn't get help and I guess they thought I was going to pass on because I remember having these strange, weird nightmares. I had such a high fever they couldn't get the fever down. So they said that they were afraid they were going to lose me but somehow I made it through, Mom nursed me through. But I still had awful dreams of all those things. But coming to Utah was more moderate. It's not the desert life.

We take a break, and then pick up the conversation with Lily's wedding in 1952.

So Adina said you had a story about your wedding dress?

Oh. I got married when I was a teen, yet. Everybody else was going dancing, all having their fun but I don't know I got married–

Adina: Right after you graduated right?

Yeah, right after we got back from camp. So that was actually my school prom dress. I had Mother make me my icy blue, satin gown, strapless. I never had things like that. So she made all that for me. And I used that as my undergarment and then had her help make the top, organza one. She made all that.

How did you and Clarence meet? You were very young.

I was too young to know anything, I had never been out for a date. But he was a member of the church in the early days. So he was about twelve years older than me. He was a much older man but he went to WWII and was in Germany. And I was still only in high school.

Yuri on her wedding day. Clarence Matsumura is on the left, facing away.

How did you get introduced?

He came to the church one day and I used to be the organist. Because I used to play the piano when I was a little girl. He was already in his thirties, and I was only–

You were 18?

Something like that.

But you must have gotten along?

You know, it's funny. He gave me the ring, I never told grandma. But he gave me the engagement ring and he told me to wear it. But I asked him to talk to, or show it to Grandma and Grandpa, but he wouldn't do it. So I should've known then that he's a stubborn, hard man to deal with. But at that time, I didn't know what to do.

So when Grandma and Grandpa had a church prayer meeting gathering at our house, I had the ring hidden because he gave it to me to wear it. I said it's not for me to wear it without making arrangements with my parents. So I wouldn't wear it, and I had it hidden in a drawer in my bedroom. But then one day he said his friend from Chicago was coming to visit him there [at Lily's parents' house]. And he told him about the engagement kind of thing. But I said, you got to talk to my parents. I didn't know what to do, I was caught in-between. But, I got the ring and put it on myself that night because the church people were all there. And they met every week, or every other week, and on that particular night, it was at my mother's house. And I put the ring on, just to please him because he told his friend that he

got engaged. The unfortunate thing was, Mrs. Kagiwara one of the church members noticed the ring on my hand but my parents didn't know anything about it. It was an embarrassing thing.

Adina: It was quite scandalous, huh?

Yeah, I just felt I didn't know what to do, but I didn't want to upset him. But he said, 'It's none of their business', kind of thing. I should have known then, if he said it's none of their business, but his friend is coming to see him there. I learned from that there — but I'm too naive. And it was too late. Church member goes and congratulates my parents.

They didn't know.

They didn't know anything about it. He didn't even talk to him either.

That's strange.

Clarence and Yuri at their engagement party. Clarence was a veteran of the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, the Nisei unit that discovered one of the subcamps of Dachau.

He told his friend but he doesn't even talk to my parents. So he put me in a spot always, but he was about twelve, thirteen years older than me, so he just did anything, what he pleased. I didn't think I'd have that kind of trouble. He made it hard for me in many ways.

And you think that was because of the age?

Yes, he was in WWII, he was in Germany. So he was much more arrogant. But why he was so set on me, that I don't understand either. I never went out with anyone before. And I thought he was a decent man. But I should've learned from the way he was talking to me and treating me, you know? You don't do things like that. I don't know why he was convinced that he was going to marry me, that's all.

Adina: One of my mom's cousins said that my grandmother was the

prettiest woman he ever saw. So I think he was just attracted, definitely.

It's funny, he knew he would have to meet your parents and talk to them. But he made no effort.

Adina: Well my great-grandmother was a very scary opponent, so I could see how he would want to just try to scoop her up and elope, type of thing.

I should've known better then but not going out for dates, we didn't know the etiquettes. And I was more scared of him.

Adina: Yeah so my mom had grown up in a situation where it was really challenging. Because here she's hearing all these stories that her father stole my grandmother's youth, her best years, that type of thing. And then with my grandfather, he had remarried, so there was never the relationship she was looking for from him.

And did he have other children?

Adina: I don't think they had children. I think my mom was his only child. There was just no real relationship between them. I remember her trying to connect with him and everybody categorized Clarence as a big talker, that's what everybody would say about him.

Like charismatic?

Adina: Yes, exactly. But when I was cleaning out the house when I first moved back to L.A. after college, I had found a bunch of my grandma's love letters, or correspondence back and forth to him. But there was a stack of letters that my grandma and Clarence were writing back and forth to each other. Probably when he was serving, right? You guys were writing back and forth a lot?

Lily: Well that's when, I think because I didn't hear from him, after I left home to live with him, he'd do things, and then he'd get upset and he'd leave house. And I don't know if he's ever going to come home. And one time I was in Darice's crib, crying and sleeping. And I thought I have got to go find a job. I don't if he's going to come home—how I'm going to pay the

rent? I walked over to the nursery school and left her and got on the Figueroa bus. The Broadway department store is a place where I always used to go shopping so I just asked for a job of anything. Then they said they liked me, I was dressed in my suit. They gave me the window job right away.

You helped design window displays?

I had to actually display them, and I don't know why but I wanted to do kimono but I couldn't get any. I called a dance teacher and found out they were so expensive and they said the light on it would fade it and all kinds of things.

And then I thought of Japan Airlines down the block. I guess it was Fifth Street. And so I just called them to ask if they have advertisements of hostesses or stewardesses in kimono. So I asked if I could borrow a kimono and I don't know why, he said he liked my telephone voice. And there was a Clark Hotel right next door to my Broadway department store downstairs at that time, he'd said he'll meet me there. I've never been in a bar in my whole life and I thought, 'What kind of man is he?' No, I shouldn't do this [*laughs*].

'Who's trying to meet me at a bar by hearing me on the phone?' Wow.

It was funny how he said he'd like to meet me and it's funny how one thing led to another, and he wanted to have me come to Japan Airlines and take care of their PBX, their switchboard. And I was doing that in my senior year [of high school].

So how many years did you work with Japan Airlines?

I retired with them, I guess it was about 20 years, I think. They had an early retirement, so I took the early retirement.

So that was it for you. You got that job and you enjoyed what you were doing. So going back to Clarence, did he leave that last time?

He came back after a while, I don't know how many months later after I already got my new job and taking the bus and doing things. Because he took all the bank book, the car keys, things he said all belonged to him which is true, I wasn't working. And it was his but I had nothing. So that night I called Grandma and she brought me a bag of rice but that's not enough to feed Darice and me, she was just a baby. And I took her to school and she hung onto my legs saying, 'Mommy, mommy,' and I cried, too. And he'd come back and stay for a while, and then take off.

Did he come home with post-traumatic stress disorder from the war?

I have no idea. Personality, I think.

And then you had another marriage. How did that happen?

Oh, with Ted. He was born and raised in Japan but my office Japan Airlines was in downtown L.A., on Sixth Street. I needed brochures to put into the rack for the people to pick up to entice them on tours. So I went to Japan Travel Bureau one day, I said I'll pick it up during my lunch hour. So I went to the office. And here was this man, you know, I've always talked to him by telephone. And he had the hardest accent, it's always 'Japan Tu-ra-bu-ro Bu-ro,' something like that, and I used to always make fun of it to him. 'What kind of trouble do you sell today?' Crazy things. And how that kind of friendship could after a while grow. And finally meeting him one day, he's quite — it just surprised me, the stance of him. After I took the brochure, I guess he impressed me ever since.

So he was from Japan?

Uh huh. And he was just here for assignment. They were saying people from Japan work here for a year, two years for the experience. And he was working at the Imperial Hotel where the tourists come. He was working there and I guess, I didn't know him then. I'd stay always at the Imperial Hotel and I always went down to the tourist office to get material information so I can study Japan. But I never met him there. Isn't it funny how probably your paths crossed earlier but you didn't know?

And you liked him and already talked to him, so you just clicked?

After dropping in to pick up the material, I was impressed. But we were talking about skiing. That's what it was. I said, 'Our Japan Airline Group is going skiing on a certain weekend, did you want to join us?' We're just staying over the weekend. Maybe two days to ski. And I guess he was new to the city, too, just coming from Japan. But I had no idea he lived down close to where I was living on the other side of the hill.

Ted and Yuri at her parents home in Los Angeles

So he said yes, he'd like to join the Japan Airline Group. I was surprised, I barely made it down the hill with my skis. I couldn't ski but I wanted to learn. But he was the one who was swishing down and I found out that as a little boy, he lived in the snow country on Japan's seaside. So they would go skiing all the time.

He studied nature and [American] Indians, the Native people of here, the country. And I said we knew some friends in New Mexico and we'll be going to visit. And I asked him if we would like to go see some of the country in that area and he said he would love to. So we invited him to join us and that's how we got to know each other a little better. But we were down in Canyon Mesa Verde I think it was, down this steep slope down below, and there's this big cave-like place. You had to walk down this steep walkway down to the bottom. And I don't know, just like Clarence, my husband then, he just walks on ahead and don't care, or he's way up here and I'm way back here, can't make it quite up. You can climb these big stones, boulders to get up.

But Ted, he stayed behind to make sure that I made it up on the route up. And if it wasn't for this one huge boulder, you couldn't get up, you were looking around and you saw a hand coming down saying, 'Come on. I'll help you up.' I was so touched that someone would care enough to help you, pull you up. So that reaching hand, always, I never forgot it. And Clarence, my

first husband, he was getting more nastier and just ignoring, and I don't know. So I guess that's where Ted became concerned about my well-being and welfare, and he ends up taking care of me.

Yuri and Adina

Adina: Yeah so getting a divorce was a big deal.

I could see at that time.

Oh yeah. It was shame.

But how many years were you married to Clarence?

Oh, umpteen years.

Adina: But she married Ted in, what '79? It was around '79. And then I was born '80. So I don't have any recollection of Ted at all but the two of them actually named me. So my Mom didn't even get to name me [*laughs*].

So you and Ted gave Adina her name?

Yeah. In fact, he was the one that had to have the right name for her. And Kazumi, means way down in the depth of the ocean, far in the middle of the ocean somewhere, he said there was a very calm, quiet, serene environment. He said that's what you want. [*To Adina*] So your Japanese character [kanji], it might be pronounced like many Kazu-something, it's a very popular word. But her Japanese character is that deep ocean calm, beauty. It's a special name and he named her.

How beautiful.

He liked mountains like I did, too and we went camping. Yeah, did a lot of things together. I was just so sorry he had to get sick like that, huh?

Adina: She doesn't know, Grandma, you didn't tell her that part yet.

Oh, he had stomach cancer, it seemed like he had it in Japan, it was very

common. His sister, they were both living together somewhere a little north of Tokyo. Apparently the air was bad, factories around there, that's where they lived. But she died with that stomach cancer and when I had broken my leg or something, and I was going to acupuncture, he was doing the needle thing on my ankles and my back because I messed up my back and my ankle got twisted and broken.

Ted (Shogo) and Yuri Tsurumaki

And he said one day, 'You take Ted right away,' you know, that weekend to a doctor. He said he has to get it taken care of right away. And I don't know how he could know but he did know, and we went to the family doctor and he referred us to another doctor and found out that it was already cancer. But unfortunately, we found out later it had already gotten into his stomach lining. He was healthy and strong so you would never know it.

So I was going to work everyday, and I would stop by in the morning to see him. Going to work and then after work because my work demanded so much of me and I was senior. I had to clean up a lot of the messes. Days' checks to ticket stocks, to just everything they didn't want just anyone to handle. So those are things I was doing at Japan Airlines after. So I had to stay late often. And after, I sometimes used to eat a lot over there at that corner, what was that dining—

Adina: Pacific Dining Car.

Yeah right across the hospital is a little eatery, dining room. So I used to go and have their vegetables. So they did take him into surgery and they took his stomach out so he could only eat spoonfuls of food. After a while, it's taking its toll, you know? But in the meantime, when we could, we did travel. Went up to Canada or did things we could do on trips because he

loved the mountains, and I liked the mountains.

Adina: So Ted passed away, it was ’81, something like that. I grew up going with Grandma over to the cemetery to visit his gravesite and they always had these swans at the fountain area. So that’s one of my childhood memories was always going to visit his gravesite.

Yuri and Adina feed the swans at the cemetery

So you weren’t married very long at all then before you found out he had cancer. Wow, I’m sorry.

He was a special man, you know.

Adina: Yeah so Ted was the love of her life, that was short-lived.

Single love of my life, yeah.

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